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'Politics' at CIA Feared

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Warnings that the appointment of George Bush could lead to election-year manipulation of the supposedly nonpartisan Central Intelligence Agency were sounded yesterday on Capitol Hill and within the intelligence community.

Indicative of the reaction was the comment of Sen. Frank Church (D-Idaho):

"Once they used to give former national party chairmen postmaster generalships—the most political and least sensitive job in government. Now they have given this former party chairman the most sensitive and least political agency."

Church, chairman of the Senate CIA investigating committee, said he would be obliged to vote against the confirmation of Bush, GOP national chairman during the 1972 presidential campaign, "based on my present

knowledge of his background and experience in this field."

He said Bush's appointment could well "compromise the independence of the CIA."

Bush, interviewed in Peking by Reuter, inadvertently may have added fuel to the controversy with the observation that he was not sure the CIA appointment meant his political career was over. Bush currently heads the U.S. liaison office in China.

President Ford in his press conference Monday night also fed the concern with the observation that he did not think either Bush or Donald Rumsfeld, his nominee as Defense Secretary, could be eliminated from "consideration by anybody" for the vice presidency.

An illustration of the specific sort of worry the appointment has generated

was provided by one Senate intelligence investigator.

"Richard Helms (former CIA director) kept saying 'no' to overtures from the White House in June, 1973, that the CIA assist in the cover-up in the Watergate case. Whatever else you may say about him, Helms refused. What do you suppose George Bush would have said to the President?"

The CIA has always been uneasy with directors appointed from outside the intelligence field, but as one experienced CIA man said yesterday, "We thought they would have gone outside the political arena, at least until after the election."

He said there had been some thought that David Packard, who recently resigned as President Ford's finance chairman, might have made a better choice than Bush.

A top Senate aide raised the question of how much intelligence information critical of administration policy will go to Capitol Hill once Bush takes over.

In recent years, CIA has been available for briefings and has supplied its daily intelligence summaries to key committee members and staffs. "A professional intelligence agency can do that," the aide said, "but Bush is a member of the administration team in an election year and is not a professional intelligence man."

Illustrative of the issue of the CIA's integrity in intelligence reporting was the conflict over the politically controversial ABM Safeguard system as well as Soviet missile strength during the early years of the Nixon administration.

CIA assessments were sharply at odds with those of the Nixon White House and the Defense Department. Helms was willing to testify on Capitol Hill against then-Defense Secretary Melvin R. Laird.

Colby risked the ire of the Ford White House and Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger by going before congressional committees and testifying about past excesses of the CIA.

The impending Senate Armed Services Committee hearings on Bush's nomination are expected to become the forum in which the issue of the CIA's political independence will be debated by Congress and the administration.

The position of deputy CIA director takes on new importance with the appointment of a non-professional outsider like Bush. In the past the No. 2 man has been a CIA insider and taken a strong hand in running the agency when the top job was held by an outsider.

Lt. Gen. Vernon Walters, the current deputy and a political appointee of former President Nixon, said yesterday he intended to consult the White House to find out if President Ford wants him to stay.